

# Terrestrial Animal Health and Standards Commission Report September 2014 (PTO)

## CHAPTER 5.2.

### CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

#### Article 5.2.1.

##### **Protection of the professional integrity of the certifying veterinarian**

Certification should be based on the highest possible ethical standards, the most important of which is that the professional integrity of the certifying *veterinarian* should be respected and safeguarded according to Chapters 3.1. and 3.2.

It is essential to include in any requirements only those specific statements that can be accurately and honestly signed by a certifying *veterinarian*. For example, these requirements should not include certification of an area as being free from *diseases* other than *notifiable diseases*, or the occurrence of which the signing *veterinarian* is not necessarily informed about. It is unacceptable to ask for certification for events which will take place after the document is signed when these events are not under the direct control and supervision of the signing *veterinarian*.

Certification of freedom from *diseases* based on purely clinical freedom and *herd* history is of limited value. This is also true of *diseases* for which there is no specific diagnostic test, or the value of the test as a diagnostic aid is limited.

The note of guidance referred to in Article 5.1.1. is not only to inform the signing *veterinarian* but also to safeguard professional integrity.

#### Article 5.2.2.

##### **Certifying veterinarians**

Certifying *veterinarians* should:

- 1) be authorised by the *Veterinary Authority* of the *exporting country* to sign *international veterinary certificates*;
- 2) only certify matters that are within their own knowledge at the time of signing the certificate, or that have been separately attested by another competent party;
- 3) sign only at the appropriate time certificates that have been completed fully and correctly; where a certificate is signed on the basis of supporting documentation, the certifying *veterinarian* should have verified or be in possession of that documentation before signing;
- 4) have no conflict of interest in the commercial aspects of the *animals* or animal products being certified and be independent from the commercial parties.

#### Article 5.2.3.

##### **Preparation of international veterinary certificates**

Certificates should be drawn up in accordance with the following principles:

- 1) Certificates should be designed so as to minimise the potential for fraud including use of a unique identification number, or other appropriate means to ensure security. Paper certificates should bear the signature of the certifying *veterinarian* and the official identifier (stamp) of the issuing *Veterinary Authority*. Each page of a multiple page certificate should bear the unique certificate number and a number indicating the number of the page out of the total number of pages. Electronic certification procedures should include equivalent safeguards.

- 2) Certificates should be written using terms that are simple, unambiguous and as easy to understand as possible, without losing their legal meaning.
- 3) If so required, certificates should be written in the language of the *importing country*. In such circumstances, they should also be written in a language understood by the certifying *veterinarian*.
- 4) Certificates should require appropriate identification of *animals* and animal products except where this is impractical (e.g. *day-old birds*).
- 5) Certificates should not require a *veterinarian* to certify matters that are outside his/her knowledge or which he/she cannot ascertain and verify.
- 6) Where appropriate, when presented to the certifying *veterinarian*, certificates should be accompanied by notes of guidance indicating the extent of enquiries, tests or examinations expected to be carried out before the certificate is signed.
- 7) The text of a certificate should not be amended except by deletions which should be signed and stamped by the certifying *veterinarian*.
- 8) The signature and stamp should be in a colour different from that of the printing of the certificate. The stamp may be embossed instead of being a different colour.
- 9) Replacement certificates may be issued by a *Veterinary Authority* to replace certificates that have been, for example, lost, damaged, contain errors, or where the original information is no longer correct. These replacements should be provided by the issuing authority and be clearly marked to indicate that they are replacing the original certificate. A replacement certificate should reference the number and the issue date of the certificate that it supersedes. The superseded certificate should be cancelled and, where possible, returned to the issuing authority.
- 10) Only original certificates are acceptable.

#### Article 5.2.4.

#### Electronic certification

- 1) Certification may be provided by electronic exchange of data ~~documentation~~ sent directly from the *Veterinary Authority* of the *exporting country* to the *Veterinary Authority* of the *importing country*.
  - a) Systems providing electronic certificates normally provide an interface with the commercial organisation marketing the *commodity* for provision of information to the certifying authority. The certifying *veterinarian* should have access to all information such as *laboratory* results and *animal identification* data.
  - b) When exchanging electronic certificates and in order to fully utilise electronic data exchange the *Veterinary Authorities* should use internationally standardised language, message structure and exchange protocols. Guidance for electronic certification in standardised ~~World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)~~ Extensible Markup Language (XML ~~schemas~~) as well as secure exchange mechanisms between *Veterinary Authorities* is provided by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT).
  - c) A secure method of electronic data exchange should be ensured by digital authentication of the certificates, encryption, non-repudiation mechanisms, controlled and audited access and firewalls.

- 2) Electronic certificates may be in a different format but should carry the same information as conventional paper certificates.
- 3) The *Veterinary Authority* should have in place systems for the security of electronic certificates against access by unauthorised persons or organisations.
- 4) The certifying *veterinarian* should be officially responsible for the secure use of his/her electronic signature.

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